

GERIATRIC NURSING: A STUDY OF THE WORK OF GERIATRIC WARD STAFF. By G. F. Adams and P. L. McIlwraith. (Pp. xix + 77; figs. 2. 7s. 6d.) London: Published for the Nuffield Provincial Hospitals Trust by Oxford University Press, 1963.

THIS study is the result of combined effort on the part of many people. It is partly the work of a team of experts trained to observe, question, analyse and, if need be, criticize. It is partly the work of senior nurses, women of courage and tenacity, who have already brought the art of geriatric nursing to an exceedingly high level. Above all, it is the work of a physician who was once faced with 360 "chronic sick" in wards containing sixty-five beds (and precious little else) in four rows, and who, thanks to new building, skilful reconstruction, and leadership, transformed a block, known euphemistically as "Convalescents" but better deserving as its motto, "Abandon hope all ye who enter here," into a dynamic unit.

In the appendices are set out in detail the exact procedures and the time and staff required for such care of the elderly as will enable the greatest possible number to return to active life in the community, and the rest to survive in comfort, and at the last, to die with dignity.

Appendix 14, on night staffing, is an admirable analysis of allocation of duties between members of a ward team, with shrewd comments on the profitable use of different grades of staff. Such details about a part of the nursing which rarely comes directly under the eye of the consultant are most valuable.

The notes on methods and equipment (Appendix 15) though brief, because the subject is dealt with more fully in the Whittington Hospital report, are useful on account of their local applications.

Plans of the new wards are also given, showing that a section in each is devoted to long-stay patients in whom rehabilitation is not to be hoped for. It is Dr. Adams' contention that similar sections should be planned in the building of all hospitals, so that the load of heavy nursing may be more evenly spread within each hospital. It is interesting to recall that this was originally the practice in the Belfast City Hospital, when each ward had a proportion of long stay patients, at the further end, to be sure, but sufficiently integrated to enjoy contact with younger patients and the cheerful atmosphere of progress and recovery. It is not possible to undertake specialised rehabilitation techniques in such circumstances, and only patients unlikely to require these facilities should be retained. In fact, with the continually increasing demand for geriatric beds, of which adequate numbers are still not available, the situation is re-creating itself, with the sad difference that the old people who used to be the favourites of all the staff, are now viewed with resignation, if not with actual resentment, as being out of place in an acute ward. Such is the result of insidious "conditioning"! The conclusions reached in this report, since they are based on exact calculations, are not matters of opinion, but of hard fact. They show clearly that the standard of nursing required in a geriatric unit is in no way inferior to that in acute medical wards and can only be maintained by comparable numbers of staff of similar grades.

Given the essential establishment, and the provision of geriatric beds in all training schools, so that all nurses may have an opportunity to become proficient in the meticulous techniques required, the nursing of elderly patients would be found to be exacting indeed, but giving full scope for all the skill, ingenuity, and tenderness, which distinguish the true nurse from the technician. The supposed unpopularity of geriatric nursing is almost entirely due to two factors: from sheer lack of experience, many matrons and tutors simply do not know what opportunities there are, not only for devotion and conscientiousness (which do not necessarily exclude academic ability!) but also for technical skill. And, secondly, because of unrealistic establishments, those women who do embark on this branch of nursing, find themselves overworked, jaded and depressed.

To assist with the care of an aged parent throughout weary terminal illness is to learn at bitter cost just how highly skilled is this art which is so lightly regarded by those

who should be leaders in their profession. One thinks of the ready acceptance of one nurse to one baby being the correct staffing for an infants' ward. And one wonders, wryly, why other nurses should be expected to care for thrice as many geriatric patients, whose needs are as great, whose demands more vocal, and who weigh approximately fourteen times as much.

The problem of caring for an ageing population is a complex one. It often calls for what might seem to the outsider to be great sacrifice within the family (only that "love knoweth no measure, but is fervent beyond all measure") and for much generosity from the whole community. Few, however, will escape a stay in hospital in their later years. Many will die in hospital. It depends very much on the action taken as a result of this report whether that experience is foreseen with tranquillity or with despair. M. J. L. F.

SOME ASPECTS OF INTERNAL IRRADIATION. Edited by T. F. Dougherty, W. S. S. Jec, C. W. Mays, and B. J. Stover. (Pp. xviii + 529; illustrated. 100s.) Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1963.

THIS well-bound volume is comprised of thirty-three edited papers from a symposium held at Heber, Utah, in May, 1961.

Most of these papers deal with the effects of internally deposited, bone-seeking, radio-nuclides in various mammals. Detailed and comprehensive information is given on the results of a large-scale experiment, using adult beagles, carried out in the University of Utah, and almost half the papers in this volume are based on the various physical and biological effects of radium, plutonium, mesothorium, radiothorium and strontium 90 on these animals.

An additional attraction is the fact that an account is given of the discussion following the presentation of each paper. In these, the experts in many cases pin-point the remaining problems and outline the direction in which further research will be required.

A section is devoted to papers on the physical problems of distribution and dosimetry of alpha and beta emitters in the body, and contains contributions from such distinguished British medical physicists as Professors Lamerton and Spiers.

Although the need for longer term animal studies is recognised, this book probably comprises the most comprehensive collection to date of data on the effects of internally deposited radio-nuclides. Even if the difficulties in extrapolating most of the results obtained in their application to man are all too apparent, the available information on humans who have ingested radium and mesothorium (early luminous dial painters and patients injected with thorotrast) correlated with the results of these animal studies using the same and other radioisotopes, may help to define more precisely the hazard to man involved in the use and misuse of these substances.

A book of this nature, presenting such a mass of new data, should grow in importance as the use, and associated hazards, of these bone-seeking radio-nuclides becomes more widespread. A. R. L.

THE PATHOGENESIS OF ESSENTIAL HYPERTENSION: PROCEEDINGS OF THE PRAGUE SYMPOSIUM. Edited by J. H. Cort. (Pp. 477. 100s.) Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1962.

THIS is a report of the symposium held under joint W.H.O. and Czechoslovak Cardiological Society auspices in Prague in 1960. The entire production is in English and the editors must have had many difficulties.

The symposium covers papers on the definition and natural history of hypertension, epidemiological studies, the nervous system and essential hypertension, the hæmo-dynamics of essential hypertension, vessel wall factors and metabolic factors. In spite of this wide coverage there is still room for debate of what constitutes hypertension, and the casual reading evidently gives little information. The contributors have produced an interesting series of papers, but perhaps even more interesting is the diversity of their opinions upon what is, or is not, a common disease process. J. H. B.